

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)



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September 18, 2002

TO: Members of the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
 FROM: *RK* Robert Krell, Research Analyst
 SUBJECT: Washington Management Service (WMS) Follow-Up Report

Introduction

The attached follow-up report from the Department of Personnel (DOP) responds to an *Addendum* the Committee added to its study of the Washington Management Service (WMS) released in January 2002. Members expressed concern over the WMS's rate of growth and requested the Department, in collaboration with other state agencies, to:

examine and assess the extent to which positions within the WMS meet all current statutory and administrative system eligibility requirements, and provide information on WMS employees by gender and by the counties in which they are employed.

Summary of Original Study Findings

This mandated study¹ was directed to look at three issues relating to the WMS: 1) growth in the number of positions; 2) growth in salary levels; and 3) other compensation practices. Regarding the latter two issues, there were no findings that raised concern.

Regarding the issue of growth in the number of positions, we found that the number of WMS employees increased from 445 when the system was implemented statewide in July 1994, to 4,994 as of July 2001. (It has since increased to over 5,200 as of April 2002.) From July 1998—a point which allows ample time for the system to have been fully implemented—to July 2001, the number of WMS employees increased by 38 percent. This compared to a growth rate of 2.5 percent among non-WMS employees during the same period. As a proportion of the total Merit System 1 workforce, WMS employees increased from 6.6 to 8.6 percent during this same time period. The study also found that the majority of WMS positions are at the lower end of the management hierarchy and that nearly half of the WMS employees added over the past three years do not directly manage any other employees.

The Department of Personnel's Report

DOP's follow-up report is attached, along with a cover letter that summarizes their key findings as well as the actions it has taken, and will take, in response to those findings.

¹ The mandate was included in the 2001-03 Operating Budget (Chapter 7, Laws of 2001, 2nd Ex. Sess. Section 103(6)).

JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

WMS Follow-up Report
September 18, 2002
Page 2

In brief, the Department found that 50 out of 483 positions examined (10 percent) were improperly placed within WMS. More than three-quarters of the improperly placed positions were from just two agencies, the Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Corrections. The Department also found that most of the improperly placed positions (82 percent) did not have supervisory responsibilities.

As requested by JLARC, the Department's report also provides information on all WMS employees by geographic distribution and gender. Key findings include the following:

- Of 5,232 total WMS positions, 3,235—62 percent—are located in Thurston County. (While WMS employees account for just over 9 percent of the total Merit System 1 workforce statewide, they account for 16.6 percent of the Thurston County workforce.)
- Women account for 45.8 percent of the WMS workforce, compared to 52.2 percent of the total Merit System 1 workforce.²
- Minorities account for 13.3 percent of the WMS workforce, compared to 17.2 percent of the total Merit System 1 workforce.³

Again, the attached DOP report and cover letter provides more detail on these and other findings, as well as the actions that DOP is taking in response to those findings.

Attachments

² Based on data provided by the Department of Personnel in Appendix B of its report, but calculated in a different manner than shown in that appendix.

³ Based on data provided by the Department of Personnel in Appendix C of its report, but calculated in a different manner than shown in that appendix.